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Message Text

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PAGE 01 SANTO 01403 292223 Z

63
ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12

AID-20 NIC-01 SY-07 OPR-02 RSR-01 /114 W
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R 292140 Z MAR 73
FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7794
INFO CINCSO FOR POLAD
/ CINCLANT FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 1403

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, DR
SUBJECT: PROMINENT JOURNALIST ASSASSINATED

1. GREGORIO GARCIA CASTRO, AN ULTIMA HORA EDITOR AND COLUMNIST, WAS SHOT TO DEATH BY THREE UNIDENTIFIED ASSAILANTS ON A DARK DOWNTOWN STREET AS EMERGED FROM HIS SANTO DOMINGO OFFICE AT 9:30 PM ON MARCH 28. ACCORDING TO ONE PRESS ACCOUNT, GARCIA CASTRO HAD THREE DAYS EARLIER SAID TO A FRIEND THAT HE FEARED HE WOULD BE ASSASSINATED. SECRETARY OF THE PRESIDENCY MAJ. GEN. NEIT NIVAR SEIJAS, WITH WHOM GARCIA CASTRO WAS SOMETIMES CLOSELY ASSOCIATED, REPORTEDLY SPENT TWO HOURS AT THE FUNERAL HOME ON THE NIGHT OF THE MURDER. PRESIDENT BALAGUER ISSUED A STATEMENT THROUGH HIS PRESS DIRECTOR DEPLORING THE " HORRIBLE AND REPUGNANT" ASSASSINATION AND ORDERED POLICE TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO FIND THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR IT. NO ARRESTS HAVE BEEN REPORTED AS YET.

2. GARCIA CASTRO, AGED 36, HAD A LONG- STANDING FRIENDSHIP WITH BALAGUER. HE WAS ONE OF THE " LEFTIST" DEPUTIES APPOINTED IN MAY 1961 TO " LIBERALIZE" THE TRUJILLO REGIME NOMINALLY HEADED BY BALAGUER. HE WAS DEPORTED BY THE COUNCIL OF STATE IN 1962 AND, AFTER BRIEFING RETURNING UNDER THE BOSCH GOVERNMENT, AGAIN AFTER THE 19 63 COUP. WHILE IN EXILE IN PUERTO RICO IN 1964, HE HELPED FOUND THE PARTIDO REFORMISTA BRANCH THERE. AFTER HIS RETURN TO THE DR IN 1965, HE WAS ACTIVE IN THE FRENTE DE ACCION DE LA
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JUVENTUD REFORMISTA (FAJURE) UNTIL 1967. AFTER THAT TIME, HE REMAINED FRIENDLY TO BALAGUER WHILE AVOIDING ANY PUBLIC POLITICAL AFFILIATION. HE WAS ALOS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE EX- SINDICO OF SANTO DOMINGO, MANUEL ANTONIO JIMENEZ RODRIGUEZ WHOSE CANDIDACY
HE BACKED IN 1970.

3. GARCIA CASTRO' S LONG JOURNALISTIC CAREER BEGAN IN 1952 WITH LA INFORMACION IN SANTIAGO. IN ADDITION TO HIS PRESENT RESPONSI-BILITIES AT ULTIMA HORA, HE GAVE A 10- MINUTE DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS OVER A LOCAL TELEVISION STATION. HIS COMMENTARY WAS MARKED BY STRONG NATIONALISM AND A PENCHANT FOR THE PROVOCATIVE AND THE CONTROVERSIAL. HE WAS FEARLESSLY OUTSPOKEN, PUGNACIOUS, VENAL, OPPORTUNISTIC, AND EMOTIONAL. AS A RESULT, HE MADE A NUMBER OF ENEMIES IN GOVERNMENT CIRCLES. AFTER THE PLAYA CARACOLES GUERRILLA LANDING, GARCIA CASTRO WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF THE GODR' S REPRES-SIVE SECURITY MEASURES AND CONSTANTLY DEMANDED A FULLER EXPLANA-TION OF THE FACTS. HE ALSO WAS ONE OF THE JOURNALISTS WHO INTER-VIEWED ALLEGED GUERRILLA CARLOS TORIBIO PENA JAQUEZ.

4 . COMMENT: GARCIA CASTRO' S ASSASSINATION, THE FIRST IN RECENT MEMORY OF A PROMINENT DOMINICAN PERSONALITY, EXCLUDING WELL- KNOWN EXTREME LEFTISTS, HAS SHOCKED THE CAPITAL AND SENT TENSIONS SOARING AGAIN. THE TIMING OF HIS DEATH IS NOTEWORTHY, COMING WITH 48 HOURS OF STATEMENTS BY THE ARMED FORCES LEADERSHIP TO THE EFFECT THAT THE GUERRILLA OPERATION WAS IN PRACTICAL TERMS OVER. SINCE THESE STATMENTS AND UNTIL GARCIA' S ASSASSINATION, DOMINICANS FROM MANY SECTORS WERE BEGINNING TO URGE THE GODR TO LIFT ITS SECURITY MEASURES IMPOSED AT THE TIME OF THE GUERRILLA LANDING AT PLAYA CARACOLES. WITH THE INCREASED TENSIONS AND ANXIETIES ENGENDERED BY YESTERDAY' S ASSASSINATION, THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOW PROBABLY FEEL UNDER LESS PRESSURE TO MOVE TO RELAX ITS SECURITY MEASURES AND ATTITUDE TOWARD THE OPPOSITION, AT LEAST UNTIL THE CRIME IS RESOLVED.

5. GARCIA CASTRO' S MURDER WILL ALSO PROBABLY HAVE REPERCUSSIONS WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES. HE WAS WIDELY- KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN ON GENERAL NEIT NIVAR SEIJAS' PAYROLL, AT LEAST UNTIL LATE DECEMBER OF LAST YEAR. DURING THIS PERIOD, HE WROTE A NUMBER OF ARTICLES HIGHLY CRITICAL OF GENERAL ENRIQUE PEREZ Y PEREZ, PARTICULARLY FOR HIS ALLEGED ROLE IN CREATING LA BANDA, A NOTORIOUS GANG OF TOUGHS HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MURDERS OF MAY EXTREME LEFTISTS IN 1971. ACCORDING TO ONE EMBASSY SOURCE IN THE PRD, GARCIA ALLEGEDLY

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

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Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
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Executive Order: GS
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